

**COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION
IN EUROPE**

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March 5, 2004

The Honorable Colin L. Powell
Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As the United States prepares for the 60th session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, we urge that the United States delegation in Geneva press for the adoption of a strong resolution on the ongoing conflict in Chechnya, entering its fifth year. We believe that the situation in Chechnya represents the most egregious violation of international humanitarian law in the OSCE region. Regrettably, the situation has not improved since Deputy Assistant Secretary Steven Pifer testified before the Helsinki Commission in September 2003, "The daily reality for the people of Chechnya has been bleak and deteriorating...."

It should go without saying that the Russian Federation has the sovereign right to combat terrorism on its territory. The war against terrorism, however, does not justify the multitude of human rights violations documented by reputable NGOs and the State Department's own *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003*, which states, in part:

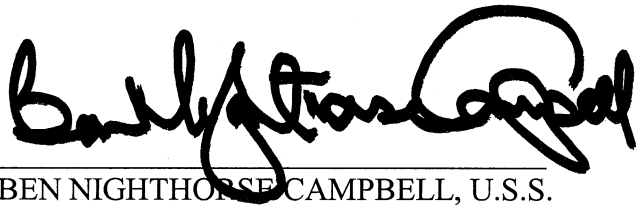
The Government's record remained poor in the continuing struggle with separatists in Chechnya, where federal security forces demonstrated little respect for basic human rights. There were credible reports of serious violations, including numerous reports of unlawful killings, and of abuse of civilians by both the Government and Chechen fighters in the Chechen conflict. There were reports of both government and rebel involvement in politically motivated disappearances in Chechnya.

Efforts to "normalize" Chechnya such as the March 2003 constitutional referendum and the flawed presidential elections in November 2003 will prove meaningless unless Moscow takes demonstrable and effective steps to uphold the rule of law and protect human rights. Needless to say, human rights violations perpetrated by Chechen insurgents rightly deserve to be condemned.

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Mr. Secretary, you have stated, and we agree fully, that a world in which every person can exercise fundamental freedoms is a world in which terrorism cannot thrive. We view a strong resolution on Chechnya at the UNHRC as consistent with that principle and urge strong U.S. leadership in Geneva to put this principle into action.

Sincerely,



BEN NIGHTHORSE CAMPBELL, U.S.S.
Co-Chairman



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, M.C.
Chairman



GORDON SMITH, U.S.S.
Member of Commission



JOSEPH R. PITTS, M.C.
Member of Commission

cc: Hon. Lorne W. Craner, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and
Labor, Department of State
Hon. Kim R. Holmes, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of International Organization
Affairs, Department of State
Amb. Richard S. Williamson, Head of Delegation, UNCHR, Geneva
Amb. Stephan M. Minikes, Head of Delegation, OSCE Vienna
Amb. Shirin Tahir-Kheli, Senior Director for Democracy, Human Rights and International
Operations, National Security Council
Thomas Graham, Director for Russian Affairs, National Security Council

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank R. Wolf", written over a horizontal line.

FRANK R. WOLF, M.C.
Member of Commission